



Code	IN3 Scriptural Story
Concept/value	Integrity , truthfulness, faith, keeping promises, honour and courage.
Title	Sakshi Gopal – the Deity Who Walked Written by Vandna Syngal
Reference	<i>Sakshi Gopal</i> , Chennai: Sri Vaikuntha Enterprises

Long ago a wise old man and his young companion set out on a trail of special temples and sacred forests. Kind and responsible, the young man took good care of the old man, making sure the senior was comfortable at every step.

Their journey ended in the beautiful Vrindavan forests where they bathed in the River Yamuna. The old man, so happy and satisfied, said, 'Thank you friend. We have reached the end of our pilgrimage and because of your care and attention I did not tire during our long travel. I appreciate your good character so much that I would like to have you as a son-in-law when we get home.'

The startled young man objected outright, 'It was a pleasure to serve you. I did it because it would please Lord Krishna, not for any reward. Moreover, your family will not approve because I am poor, uneducated and without status.'

But the old man was determined and proved this when the two men visited the sacred Gopalji temple. The mysterious Gopal deity stood smiling and beautiful. He was dressed in silk clothes and decorated with delicate flowers and sparkling jewellery. Bowing before him, the old man declared, 'Dear Lord, please be our witness that I promise to give my daughter in marriage to this worthy man.'

Once they were back in their village of Vidyanagar, there was no mention of the marriage proposal. When the old man apprehensively brought up the subject with his relatives, there was uproar.

'What! We cannot accept that poor man into the family. Your promise to the deity is not important, the marriage will not happen,' said the elder son.

Though the old man knew they were wrong, he did not stop his family from being rude to the young man when he came to visit.

'Leave our house and never come back!' they shouted at him.

Hearing the commotion, the village leaders came. This was a grave situation for the community. It was considered a serious misdeed to break promises.

The young man made a public claim of betrothal. He did this because he cared for the old man and did not want him to suffer the ill consequences of being untruthful.

But the old man denied everything at first until eventually he admitted the truth. He said, 'If the deity Gopal comes here as your witness, then I will give my daughter without



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fail.’ Everyone, including the old man’s family, agreed to the proposal. They weren’t worried, after all, ‘who ever heard of a walking stone deity?’ they whispered.

The young man made the long journey back to Vrindavan. Ringing the temple bell, he made a sincere appeal to Gopal asking him to come to Vidyanagar and prove the truth. Moved by his prayers, the deity magically spoke, ‘How can I come with you? Deities don’t walk.’ Gopal smiled cheekily as he tested the young man.

‘You can do anything dear Lord. If you can talk then surely you can walk. After all, you’re not a statue but a real person. Please walk with me.’

Won over, Gopal said, ‘I will come. You will hear my ankle bells as I walk a little behind you but you mustn’t look back. If you do then I will remain fixed at that place.’

So they started for home. Along the way, the young man heard the melodious tinkle of bells behind him. He itched to look back but resisted. Once they reached the borders of his village, the young man noticed the bells had stopped. Alarmed, he turned around.

‘From here you go alone. Now I will stay here and not leave,’ Gopal said.

The young man ran to call everyone. They were wonderstruck to see the charming deity standing on their village outskirts. They offered prayers, flowers and food. Delighted, the old man promptly married his daughter to the young man at that very spot.

The deity startled everyone when he spoke again for one last time, ‘I am very pleased by your truthfulness and faith in me. You can ask for any blessing you like.’

Both men asked Gopal to stay at this spot forever so everyone would know how kind he was to walk to their village. Gopal agreed.

Over time, a little temple was constructed around the deity. It was named the Sakshi Gopal temple – to celebrate the miraculous occasion when Gopal honoured his devotee as a witness. (Sakshi means ‘witness’ in Sanskrit.)

Questions

- ◆ Why did the old man pretend he did not make any promise?
 - ◆ Why did the Gopal deity agree to walk to the village?
 - ◆ Describe the feelings of the young man as he walked with the deity behind him?
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